



shortnose gar

Lepisosteus platostomus

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Osteichthyes
Family: Semionotiformes
Order: Lepisosteidae

Features

The shortnose gar has a cylindrical body with diamond-shaped scales. Its snout forms a beak, which is about one-half the length of the entire head and a row of teeth is present on the upper jaw. The body color is olive or brown on the back and sides with a white belly. There usually are no dark spots on the head or snout, except on fish in clear water. The shortnose gar is smaller than the longnose. The state record fish weighed about 4 1/2 pounds and was 28 1/2 inches long.

Natural History

The shortnose gar lives in rivers, sloughs, and lakes. It prefers very warm water. It is found near aquatic plants and submerged logs. It eats insects, crayfish, and fish. It reaches maturity at a length of 18 inches (three years old). Spawning occurs May through July. The female scatters eggs over aquatic plants and other objects in shallow water. Eggs hatch in about eight days. The swim bladder is well supplied with

blood vessels and can be used as an auxiliary breathing organ.

Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes;

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

western one-third and eastern half of Iowa

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.